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Tanzania: Evicting 70K Maasai for UAE Tourism

By: [Oakland Institute](#)
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Over 70,000 Maasai in Loliondo, Tanzania Face Renewed Eviction Threat to Make Way for Safari Tourism and Trophy Hunting

- On 11 January 2022 the Tanzanian government renewed efforts to seize 1,500 km² of legally registered village land in the Loliondo Division of Ngorongoro District from Maasai pastoralists, who have sustainably stewarded the area for generations.
- The government plans would displace over 70,000 Maasai pastoralists from their ancestral land to create a wildlife corridor that would be used for trophy hunting and tourism by the United Arab Emirates (UAE)-based Otterlo Business Company (OBC).
- Large groups of Maasai have held protests and local leaders have issued a statement to stop any demarcation process from moving forward.
- At the same time, resettlement plans for Maasai living in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) have been advanced, with the government aiming to begin removing residents by the end of February 2022.



On 11 January 2022 the Arusha Regional Commissioner met with village chairmen and councilors in Loliondo Division of Ngorongoro District to inform them of the government's decision to designate the 1500 km² area of their legally registered village land as a wildlife corridor. If carried out, the creation of a wildlife corridor would result in the Maasai losing ancestral land vital to sustain their pastoral livelihoods.

This latest threat is a continuation of past efforts to evict Maasai from their land in Loliondo to allow for safari tourism and trophy hunting. The United Arab Emirates (UAE)-based *Otterlo Business Company* (OBC) — which runs hunting excursions for the country's royal family and their guests — will reportedly control commercial hunting in the area despite the company's **past involvement** in several violent evictions of the Maasai, burning of homes, and the killing of thousands of rare animals in the area.



Land Times



“That the Maasai are once again facing eviction to please the UAE royal family shows the Tanzanian government continues to prioritize tourism revenues at the expense of the Indigenous pastoralists who have sustainably stewarded the area for generations,” said Anuradha Mittal, executive director of the Oakland Institute and author of *Losing the Serengeti*, a 2018 report from the Institute that extensively documented OBC’s impact on the area.

Past violent government-led evictions of Maasai from Loliondo in 2009, 2013, and 2017 led four villages to seek recourse in the East African Court of Justice (EACJ). In September 2018, the EACJ granted an injunction, which prohibited the Tanzanian government from evicting the villagers, seizing their livestock, destroying property, or engaging in harassment against Maasai communities living in Ololosokwan, Oloirien, Kirtalo, and Arash villages. The renewed attempt to seize this same 1,500 km² of land appears to be in blatant violation of the injunction and legal action has been taken at the EACJ, where the village chairmen have applied for urgent stop orders.

In response, thousands of Maasai gathered to protest on 13–14 January 2022 in Oloirien village in Loliondo. All village chairs and ward councilors from villages with land in the 1,500 km² signed a protest statement, and so did customary leaders and women’s representatives. They are adamant that they will not leave until the decision is reversed. At great risk to their personal safety given the Tanzanian government’s past intolerance of dissent, Maasai have remained in the area despite a heavy presence of Tanzania Wildlife Authority (TAWA) rangers. “The Maasai courageously protesting to protect their land, urgently needs international attention and solidarity,” added Mittal.

Additionally, in a separate but closely related matter, the Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA) has submitted a budget request to begin short-term implementation of a relocation plan that’s eventually meant to affect over 80,000 residents starting by the end of February 2022. As previously exposed in *The Looming Threat of Eviction*, the government’s multiple land-use management (MLUM) and resettlement plan — created with heavy influence from the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC) — threatens the continued survival of the Maasai living in the NCA through increased livelihood restrictions.

“The government’s own reports acknowledge that the Indigenous in the NCA successfully protect wildlife from poaching. Removing us will only hurt the health of wildlife we have co-existed alongside for millennium,” stated a traditional Maasai leader living in the NCA.

A petition run by Rainforest Rescue with the Oakland Institute has already garnered over 100,000 signatures, supporting the demands of Maasai communities in the NCA to the UNESCO WHC to stop the planned evictions and grant them autonomy over future land use decisions. With the failure of UNESCO WHC to take action, the Tanzanian government continues to trample the rights of the Maasai. In light of this impending calamity, the Oakland Institute echoes calls made by local communities for international support and an immediate end to displacement and evictions.

[Sign the petition here](#)

[Original appeal](#)

Photo: Maasai pastoralists protesting in Loliondo, January 2022. Source: Oakland Institute.

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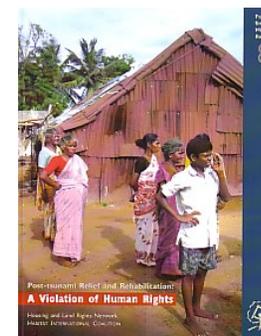
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